

Forum: Commission on the Status of Women

Issue: Reducing Income Inequality and Discrimination
Against Women Within STEM Workforces

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Introduction

Gender discrimination and income inequality in the workplace are both issues that are deeply affecting women all throughout the world. Social inequalities arose as people started to accumulate private property. Ever since then, gender discrimination has always been a persistent issue. It can be seen in the workforce, education, household, and everywhere else. Some even argue that gender discrimination is deep rooted in our genes and that it is part of our biological self. However, the statement is most certainly false as gender discrimination is caused by society's views.

There is an alarmingly scarce amount of females in STEM fields especially in LEDCs. STEM fields requires a higher level of education and most women don't have access to this. Education is still a struggling issue in many LEDCs and some women still don't have access to secondary or higher level education. Beside from not having access, in some societies there are pre-existing traditional and social norms that prevent women from pursuing education and STEM careers. Women are not given equal opportunity when it comes to STEM careers.

Furthermore, gender stereotypes also causes discrimination towards women in the workplace. Especially with STEM careers, people have stereotypes thinking that individuals should look a certain way to pursue certain careers. For example, a technician and scientists are both seen as male figures rather than female. When female occupy these positions, people might think they are unworthy thus causing discrimination among employees. These stereotypes also causes a lack of confidence in females. Future generations would no longer enter STEM fields due to their fear of getting discriminated and stereotype threat.

Eliminating income inequality and gender discrimination in STEM workforces might be hard because it clashes with socio-cultural factors. However, through careful framework and feasible goals it is possible for nations to reach gender equality. In fact, many nations have already set their personal frameworks to reach this goal.

Definition of Key Terms

Discrimination

The unfair treatment of a person because of who they are, or certain characteristics they possess, such as their age, race, gender, disability, religion, or sexual orientation. Discrimination in the workplace can be seen with the unequal treatment towards women and the different wages between men and women. Discrimination in the workplace decreases productivity, causes poor organization morals, and negatively effect individual's mental health.

Anti-discrimination law

The legislation made and designed to prevent and end discrimination, especially against particularly targeted groups of people. On an international scale, as according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all humans have the right of equality and freedom for discrimination. However, it entirely depends on each state they enforce these rights. There are international treaties like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, that ensures that states work towards eliminating discrimination. Each state also have specific federal anti-discrimination laws that are enforced on national level.

Equal opportunity

A state of fairness in which everyone is treated similarly, regardless of irrelevant reasons such as the circumstances of their birth, upbringing, religion, sex, ethnicity, race, disability, or sexual orientation. It means that everyone has an equal chance in all areas of public life such as in school or when seeking employment. In 2017, women CEOs made up only 6.4 percent of US companies, that number is now down to 4.8 percent. In this case, women are not given equal opportunity for senior positions in employment.

Economic Inequality

Lack of equality concerning the distribution of income and the distribution of wealth. Economic inequality can be measured in different methods including Gini coefficient and the inequality-adjusted human development index. Research has shown that economic inequality hinders growth, and decreases the productivity.

STEM

A term used to group the academic fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, usually when addressing education policies or workforce development. In most

states, there are insufficient numbers of women in the field of STEM. This is due to many reasons such as socio-cultural influences, stereotypes, inequality, lack of confidence and discrimination.

Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap is the difference between the wages of women and men in the labor market. The gender pay gap is in favor of males in the labor market. According to the US Department of Labor, women who worked full-time year-round earned 79 percent as much as their male counterparts as of 2014. Even in the United States there is about a 20 percent gender pay gap. LEDC countries have a much wider gender pay gap especially those with traditional gender norms.

Glass Ceiling

A metaphor used to represent an invisible barrier that keeps a female from rising beyond a certain level in a hierarchy. In a workforce, it is when a female cannot pursue a senior position and cannot get higher than their current position. This term is often used along side of the term “mommy track.” The term “mommy track” describes the belief of how women were less dedicated employees due to their maternal duties and thus they were not granted promotions and raises.

History

World War II

In 1945, there was a group of female high school graduates known as “The Calutron girls” that worked on the Manhattan Project. Their job was to isolate enriched uranium to produce the first nuclear bombs used in WWII. Isolating uranium involved using complex machinery, they used complex calutrons that used electromagnetic separation. While their male counterparts were informed about the project, the calutron girls were kept in the dark about the work they were doing. Furthermore, they had greater production rates than male scientists, however, were not paid equal wages. In 1946, six young women programmed the ENIAC, the first programmable computer, as part of a secret WWII project led by the U.S army. When the computer was later released to the public, these young women were never mentioned for their hard work. WWII gave women a starting point in the STEM workforces, although there was

discrimination in the workplace. During the war, while the men left to fight in the army, there was a shortage of civilian male workers, therefore, women had to step up. When the men returned from war, the situation of females in STEM worsened as these men demanded their jobs back.

Cold War

During the Cold War, the governments of the USSR and US urged scientific discovery and achievements. Therefore, everyone was encouraged to join STEM workforces. This was a time where the push for STEM conflicted with gender roles and discriminatory practices. Although women were allowed to enter STEM jobs, employers have no intention to boost their positions. For instance, Katherine Johnson, an African-American space scientist and mathematician, contributed greatly to American space history. She calculated key trajectories in the Space Race -- calculating the trajectory for Alan Shepard, the first American in space, as well as for the 1969 Apollo 11 flight to the moon.

Gender Discrimination

Prior to 1963, businesses could pay women lower wages for performing similar work as a man. Women were rarely found in positions of authority in the workforce. This all changed after the Equal Pay Act of 1963 which made it requirements for gender equality in payment of wages. It was illegal to pay someone less simply because of their gender. This act gave the employee the right to sue their employer for discrimination due to gender. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act granted women the right to be employed in all fields. In 1991, the Civil Rights Act was amended to include the right to sue an employer for sexual harassment. Society is taking steps closer and closer to gender equality with each day by implementing laws to ensure safety, comfort, and provide basic rights of different genders.

Key Issues

Bias in hiring and pay salaries

Since it is a tradition in most countries that the salary of a worker should not be revealed openly to the public, there is bias in pay salaries. Having this tradition makes it harder to track gender discrimination in the workforce. An employer can simply decide to pay a woman less wages than a man for the position and ranking. Also when it comes to hiring, studies have shown that women are less likely to be hired than men for certain positions. In the United States, women are just 5 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs in 2017 and only 7 percent of top

executives in the Fortune 100 companies. Furthermore, women occupy only 10 percent of top management positions in S&P 1500 companies. Employers often tend to believe that women are not competent to undertake certain tasks like senior positions due to deep-rooted gender stereotypes.

Bonuses and Promotions

Not only are there bias in hiring and determining wages, but there is also bias when it comes to bonuses and promotions. According to a study, men were receiving 30% more performance bonuses than women, although they were receiving the same performance ratings. Women often face glass ceilings where they cannot get promoted and they are stuck at a given position.

Motherhood and Family

The gender pay gap in most countries are caused by mothers leaving work to take care of their children. These women have less hours at work and therefore, are paid less. Since they have less hours, they have less work experience to men who work more hours. Mothers whose work schedule clash with their child care, have to take part-time jobs instead of pursuing a normal career like they wanted. Hence, the reason why statistics show more men than women in certain positions. Sociologists even coined the term “motherhood penalty” to argue that mothers go through more discrimination and lower wages compared to non-mothers. According to a study that looked at the hiring practices and preferences of employers, mothers are less likely to get hired than non-mothers. To reduce the gender gap, companies should consider supporting their employees through providing family cares, giving maternal leaves, and evaluating their hiring standards to eliminate bias.

Stereotype

Stereotypes about how someone in a STEM field should “look” like causes discrimination in the workplace. Often times certain careers like engineering, scientists, technician, etc. are seen together with a male figure rather than a female figure. When females are seen in these positions it causes certain people to believe that they are incompetent and will not be successful; these causes negative stereotypes. Negative stereotypes causes employers to overlook highly competent female employees.

Stereotype threat

Due to negative stereotypes, women feel stereotype threat in the workplace. Stereotype threat is the fear that one’s actions will confirm a negative stereotype. For instance, women are

thought to be incompetent in senior positions like CEO, therefore, a female CEO might feel threatened that if they messed up they would be confirming the negative stereotype. This causes additional stress, decreases productivity and lowers task performance in female employees. Stereotype threat is the reason why there are such scarce amount of females in the STEM field. The fear of messing up and confirming gender stereotypes takes away confidence and creates hesitation for females entering the STEM field.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

UN Women

UN Women is a UN entity founded in 2011, it strives to achieve gender equality and empower women worldwide. Gender inequality in the workforce and the gender pay gap has always been one of UN Women's key issues. Throughout the years, UN Women worked with many NGOs and intergovernmental organizations to close the gender pay gap. UN Women partnered with UNDP to start the gender economic policy management initiative and this program aims to spread awareness and inform employers and governments the importance of gender equality in the workforce.

International Labor Organization (ILO)

The ILO is a United Nations agency founded in 1919 whose purpose is to promote decent employment by international standards. It aims to promote job opportunities for women and men with conditions of freedom, equity and security. In 2018, the ILO announced a press release revealing a collaboration between EU, ILO and UN women to promote labor rights and eliminate violence towards women in the workplace in ASEAN countries. These three organizations are organizing a national Consultative Dialogue which will introduce the "Safe and Fair" programme that goes through actions that can be taken in these countries.

United States of America

In the United States, the average woman's salary is 78% to 82% to that of a man's salary. Not only gender, but race also plays a huge role in the American gender pay gap. The gender pay gap is widest for African American women and Hispanic women who on average, receives only 53% to 61% of a man's salary. Although the gender gap is closing, progress is too slow. At this rate it is predicted that the United States will reach gender pay equality in 2106. Some previous actions by the US government include the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 which

allowed workers that felt like their pay is not fair, to sue the employer. In 2017, Governor Kate Brown signed the Oregon Equal Pay Act, which forbids employers from using job seekers' prior salaries in hiring decisions. Although the Equal Pay Act of 1963 was implemented, United States still struggle to close the gender pay gap.

Scotland (UK)

The government of Scotland is actively trying to close the gender pay gap and recognizes it as one of Scotland's key issues. The Scottish government implemented the Scottish Business Pledge, a values-led between the government and businesses, which aims to productivity, competitiveness through fairness, equality and sustainable employment. One of the pledge elements that businesses are required to meet when signing the pledge is to agree to reduce the gender pay gap. Furthermore, the Scottish government also took part in the Fair work convention that implemented a framework for Scotland to close its gender pay gap.

Non-governmental Organizations

Governments and intergovernmental organizations contribute to this issue by setting legislation, making guidelines and law enforcement. However, NGOs play a major role in empowering women and helping them find careers in STEM workforces. NGOs raise awareness of the success of women in STEM workforce to allow more women to see these opportunities. Some work with companies and employers to have an equal work environment with no discrimination towards women.

TECHWOMEN

Techwomen is an organization founded by US Center for Women's Leadership Initiatives, and aims to empower women in STEM workforces throughout Africa, Central and South Asia, and the Middle East. Techwomen provides young women with opportunities and resources to pursue STEM careers and advance their current positions. It works towards breaking the gender roles and stereotypes in LEDCs. Through mentorship and role models, young women in these states get inspired to join STEM jobs and are more prepared.

Association for Women in Science (AWIS)

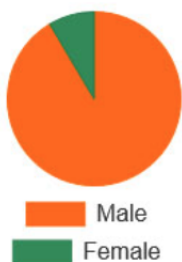
AWIS is a global network that aims to combat discrimination in STEM work environments, founded in 1971. It helps women reach their full potential in STEM workforces through leadership and professional development. It also engages in research and analysis to identify discrimination in STEM workforces. AWIS works with employers and large companies to find ways to ensure equality for women employees in their workplace.

India

In India, there is far less women in STEM workforces than men, this is due to the literacy rates. During the past decade, the number of female students enrolled at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education have gone up. The NSS 71st round report suggests a similar upward trend with the female literacy rate (age 15 & above) ascending from 54.9% in 2007-08 to 60.8% in 2014. Education restricts women from finding jobs in STEM workforces and receiving equal pay as men. A huge gap can also be seen in the amount of women pursuing STEM careers in urban and rural areas. The Indian government continues its efforts towards encouraging more women to join STEM workforces and ensuring income equality by introducing digital literacy initiatives like Digital India and Digi Gaon. Many major companies in India like IBM are also contributing to this through CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiatives that promote stem education for females students and prepare them for new-collar jobs.

Nigeria

The field of STEM is traditionally seen as a field for men as opposed to women in Nigeria. Gender discrimination in STEM forces is caused by socio-cultural factors, women are seen as not competent to undertake certain tasks and they often receive direct discrimination from employers. The gender pay gap is taken as a myth in Nigeria, people often argue that it simply does not exist, but in reality it does exist. Gender inequality in the workplace is taken as a norm that is acceptable by Nigerian citizens. To stop gender inequality the Nigerian government will have to fix these social norms and combat the deep-rooted beliefs on gender roles. According to UNDP's Africa Human Development Report 2016, "*gender inequality is costing sub-Saharan Africa, \$US95 billion a year, "peaking at US\$105 billion in 2014--or six percent of the region's GDP, jeopardising the continent's efforts for inclusive human development and economic growth."* As a result, the Nigerian government is making sure that anti-discrimination laws like the Nigeria Gender Policy of 2014 is enforced and adapted in all states.



Caption #1: Female and male employees statistics in the field of engineering in Nigeria.

Indonesia

Gender discrimination and the insufficient amount of female workers in STEM workforces are huge issues in Indonesia. As of 2005, out of 35,564 STEM researchers, only 10,874 or 31% were female. Women in STEM

careers struggle to get promoted or face discrimination due to traditional and social norms. Historically women in Indonesia were rare to hold high positions in STEM workforces. The Indonesian government, however, has been working towards eliminating stereotypes about women's roles and gender discrimination in STEM forces, through the Ministry of Education and Culture as stated by UNESCO's *A Complex Formula*.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of event
September 3, 1981	CEDAW United Nations General Assembly adopted a convention, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in 1981. This convention became known as the international bill of rights for women. 189 states have signed this convention, excluding states like Iran, Somalia, Sudan, and the United States. Among many other forms of discrimination addressed, one part deals with the economic and social rights of women, focusing on employment and education.
September 4-15, 1995	Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action was adopted by the governments that participated in the United Nations fourth conference on Women. This was to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women around the world.
September 23, 2002	EU directive The EU directive spread awareness for the implementation of equal treatment for men and women concerning access to employment, promotion and working conditions.

March 6, 2008 **Project on a Mechanism to Address Laws that Discriminate Against Women**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' Women's rights and gender unit published a report addressing laws that discriminate against women. It focuses on eliminating gender discrimination through research and analysis in different regions all around the world. This project was accomplished through collaboration with intergovernmental organizations and the Human Rights Council.

July 2, 2010 **UN Women**

The UN founded The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women which aims to empower women worldwide. UN Women helps women from many several issues including family planning, health, education and career. It collaborated with NGOs like OECD, ILO and other UN branches to eliminate the gender pay gap and to achieve equal treatment of women in STEM workforces.

September 26, 2018 **Equal Pay International Coalition**

During a UN General Assembly in New York, a pledging event took place among global leaders from governments, private sector companies, trade unions and civil society to take concrete action towards eliminating the gender pay gap. Plans were made to eliminate gender pay gap by 2030 and to ensure every woman in the workforce gets as much wages as a man.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Governments, non-profitable organizations and several UN branches have been trying to eliminate the gender pay gap and gender discrimination in STEM workforces for decades by implementing legislation, establishing national commissions, launching national awareness

campaigns, etc. However, there is little success in these actions because ultimately it is employers and corporations that need to decide for themselves to eliminate this discrimination. The government can only go so far to set minimum wages, policies and laws regarding the minimal rights that female workers should have. The mistreatment of these female workers and discrimination exists within companies behind close doors, therefore, strategies to solve this issue should focus on influencing the employers themselves on their views towards gender equality.

UN Commission on the Status of Women has partnered with UNDP for the gender economic policy management initiative (GEPMI). GEPMI is a development and policy making advisory program. It focuses on three week courses about gender equality and why it matters in the workplace, that were available in Asia and the Pacific. These courses consisted of 12 modules including topics like unpaid work, gender-responsive policy analysis, and gender roles in the labour markets. Working with international scholars, feminist economists, policy makers, UNDP and UNCSW were able to produce a course that could be delivered to employers. This program raises awareness and empower women to take higher roles in the workforce. Although these courses could help change employers' minds on the issue of gender inequality, it would be better if governments were to implement policies making these courses mandatory, to be more effective.

Possible Solutions

When approaching this topic delegates must keep in mind that discrimination and inequality in workforces are caused by the employer and the company itself. Therefore, when finding solutions, delegates should find effective solutions that change the behavior of these employers by encouraging, discouraging and methods as such.

One big issue concerning gender discrimination in the workforces would be the number of women in senior roles. In an alarming number of companies, the senior team and roles are made up of mostly men and a few women are present there. One would be to encourage companies that have a majority of their senior roles filled up with men to re-evaluate their **job specifications and prerequisite requirements**. They should identify why women are not applying for these jobs and remove barriers from the job requirements that prevent women from applying, these could be job experience duration, time schedule, etc. They should consider adopting a skills based assessment when finding employees. Skills based assessments are designed to measure the skill, knowledge, and judgement required to be employed for a certain position. Potential employees would be tested on how well they perform on a given job. This would reduce discrimination when hiring employees.

One barrier that keeps women from pursuing careers would be time management. Mothers that have to take care of their children have work schedules that clash with their children. Therefore, a good solution to this would be for companies to provide child and elder care to be **family friendly**. Working mothers often get pay penalty for taking time off. Companies should consider taking this procedure away and even providing **parental leaves** to both mothers and fathers to be able to support their children.

Encouraging transparency among companies is an important strategy for resolving gender discrimination in STEM workforces. A way to do this is to have **pre- set pay brackets** for each position and then an effective method of bonus determination that will eliminate bias. Individuals that are interested in a particular job can see how much salary they will get before they even work there. It's up to them to decide whether they are happy with the amount or not and this would not vary with gender. If the job was based off of the number of sales then the company can provide a **salary calculator**. That way the employees will be able to calculate their salary with the number of sales they make.

Questions A Resolution Must Answer

1. How should employers support mothers and fathers, who have family duties?
2. What should employers do to be transparent about their employees' wages and ensure equal pay among both genders?
3. What steps should be taken to identify all gender discrimination in the workforce?
To eliminate gender discrimination?
4. How can employers close the gender pay gap?
5. What policies should governments make to prevent the mistreatment of women in the workforce?
6. How can NGOs contribute to helping women who lack the confidence to enter the STEM workforce?
7. How to help women in LEDCs that have pre existing traditional and social norms that prevent women and men from earning equal wages?
8. How to eliminate gender stereotypes and positions in STEM workforces?
9. What can be done by governments and economic leaders to ensure that females will not face glass ceilings that prevent them from getting promoted?
10. How can nations further enforce anti-discrimination laws on a national scale?

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